



Gender Responsive Budget in Local Councils
(Feb.-July 2009)

Final Narrative Report
Submitted to
Heinrich Boell Foundation/ Arab Middle East Office – Ramallah

(August 2009)

A. Short presentation of the project

Following the pilot project “Gender Responsive Budgets in Local Councils” that was implemented in 2008 at Birzeit municipality, a six-month similar intervention was conducted in the period between February-July 2009. In this new phase, the two municipalities of Halhoul and ‘Anabta were targeted. The staff members were introduced to concepts of gender, budgets, and gender-responsive budgets.

Project objectives

- Promote gender awareness and equality in the work of local councils as a mean to strengthen a participatory approach in decision making processes.
- Raise the capacity of local-council members and employees to participate in presenting the actual key issues related to adopting Gender-Responsive Budgets in their local councils.
- Improve the collaboration and cooperation among the elected representatives of the local councils, civil society, and local communities.

Target groups

- Selected members and employees of local councils (Halhoul & Anabta Municipalities)
- Social activists working on women and gender issues within their local communities

B. Implementation

The following activities were implemented:

1. Selection of local councils

Aim: To reach out to more local councils with the concepts and mechanisms of gender- responsive budgets.

Based on the three public meetings held through the previous pilot project, targeting Al Ram, Halhoul and ‘Anabta municipalities, MIFTAH attempted to measure the level of readiness of these municipalities to join in a similar project, and the level of awareness among local communities towards gender related concepts and issues. The participants in the meeting, including the mayors of Halhoul and ‘Anabta, showed real interest in the project, demonstrating an advanced level of community awareness towards gender issues, in addition to a high level of cooperation between Halhoul and ‘Anabta municipalities and civil society organizations. The remarkable intervention of feminist social activists in both ‘Anabta and Halhoul also enriched the meetings.

Output: *'Anabta and Halhoul Municipalities were selected as target municipalities in the second phase of the pilot project on Gender Responsive Budgets in Local Councils.*

2. Introductory meetings with the selected local councils (Halhoul & Anabta)

Aim: To familiarize the Mayors, elected-council members, and employees of both municipalities ('Anabta & Halhoul) to the project objectives, activities, and related working process and mechanisms.

MIFTAH's project coordinator, arranged for two introductory meetings held at both municipalities Anabta & Halhoul in March 2009. The meetings were held in a similar manner. The participants included the mayors, the elected members, a number of department heads at the municipalities, along with MIFTAH's team, including project's coordinator, field coordinator, and two supporting members of MIFTAH team. At the beginning of the meetings, the project coordinator explained the reason behind selecting both 'Anabta and Halhoul municipalities to be MIFTAH's target of this phase of the project, indicating that the selection criteria included the level of awareness of gender related issues, the social activism and the readiness and willingness to join similar projects. Then, the project coordinator introduced the project's purpose, objectives and activities in more details, and the importance of integrating a gender responsive budgeting in the local councils' policies, plans and programs, especially that the local councils are considered to be the main source of service provision to their local communities. In addition, the process of engendering budget was briefly explained, highlighting the connection between dealing with the available resources and reaching a fair distribution of service provision among the local community. At the end of the meetings, MIFTAH's team responded to questions and queries raised by the participants.

Output: *Two successful introductory meetings were held, one at 'Anabta Municipality held on the 27th of March, 2009, and the other one at Halhoul Municipality on the 30th of March 2009.*

3. Training on Gender Mainstreaming

Aim: to sensitize the trainees to gender issues and increase their gender awareness at the personal, interpersonal, and community level.

An eighteen-hour training workshop on gender mainstreaming was conducted by MIFTAH in April and May 2009, in both Halhoul and 'Anabta Municipalities. These trainings targeted 33 participants in both municipalities (15 in Halhoul and 18 in Anabta) including the Mayors, nominated elected members and some selected department heads and employees. As is the case with MIFTAH's training methodology, a participatory approach was used including group work, open discussion and role play.

Main topics addressed in the training

- *The social roles assigned to women and men*
- *The social construction of gender*
- *Concepts of gender: gender, gender relations, practical and strategic needs, access and control over resources*
- *Ways towards changing gender inequalities*
- *Introduction to the concept of gender mainstreaming and gender responsive budgets.*

Training Activity Table 1

Location	Participants	Dates	Days	Time
Halhoul Municipality	15 participants (Mayor, members, head departments & employees, social activists) 6 Females & 9 Males	April 27 th -30 th , 2009	Monday - Thursday	9:30am – 2:000pm
Anabta Municipality	18 Participants (members, head departments & employees, social activists) 4 females & 14 males)	May 3 rd – 5 th , 2009	Sunday -Tuesday	9:00am – 3:00pm

Participant feedback and remarks:

- The training was very systematic, presenting the training material with fully supporting cases from real life.
- Remarkable active participation and involvement by the trainees, in addressing some queries, comments which enriched the training discussion.
- The trainer was very dynamic, attracting the participants’ attention and building strong positive relation, to introduce related concepts.
- MIFTAH’s coordinator and the supporting team had a very positive impact on the training environment, especially in supporting the trainers technically and facilitating the implementation of workshops.

Overall, the training achieved the expected goals. The participants were extremely involved in the training, expressing their interest in the addressed topics and concepts. The presence of both men and women gave a very dynamic discussion. It is worth mentioning that the participants at Halhoul municipality were very much committed despite the fact that they were at their work place and they had to run the Municipality and provide the services needed by the local community throughout the training. As for ‘Anabta municipality, some delays were registered in starting the training sessions, as some of the participants were involved in activities organized by the municipalities, causing interruption in some training sessions. In general, regular feedback from participants was very positive in terms of value content and methods used.

4. Training on GRB manual

Aim: Promote gender responsive budgets in local and municipal councils by raising their awareness and encouraging them to adopt gender mainstreaming and gender responsive budgets in their policies, systems, plans and programs

A four-day training workshop on GRB concepts, mechanism and implementation was conducted by MIFTAH in July 2009, in both Halhoul and ‘Anabta Municipalities. The training targeted 31 participants in both municipalities (12 in Halhoul and 17 in Anabta), most of whom participated in the gender mainstreaming training workshops. The training also included the Mayors, nominated elected members and some selected department heads and employees, in addition to some social activists. This time, all participants in both locations were fully committed to the training. **As mentioned above,** as is

the case with MIFTAH's training methodology, a participatory approach is used during the training sessions; group work, open discussion and role play.

Main topics addressed in the training:

- *How to use the budget heading of local budgets*
- *Concepts of gender responsive budgeting and its tools*
- *Engendering the local budget; tools and implementations*
- *Case study on the Birzeit Municipality budgets line items*
- *Identification of projects to be included in the local councils' budgets*

Training Activity Table 2

Location	Participants	Dates	Days	Time
Halhoul Municipality	12 participants (Vice Mayor, members, head departments & employees, social activists) 6 Females & 6 Males	July 4 th -7 th , 2009	Saturday -Tuesday	9:30am – 2:000pm
Anabta Municipality	17 Participants (Mayor, members, head departments & employees, social activists) 3 females & 14 males)	July 8 th – 9 th , 12 th -13 th 2009	Wednesday – Thursday, Sunday - Monday	10:30am – 3:00pm

Participant feedback and remarks:

- The training was very systematic, presenting the training material with detailed supporting cases from real life.
- The trainer was very dynamic; the methods used attracted the participants' attention and concentration, and fulfilled participant expectations.
- The participants, including department heads and other municipality employees, were pressed with time, especially that the training was conducted during their working hours and they had to work overtime.
- The training material was very valuable and presented in an organized manner order.
- MIFTAH's project coordinator and the supporting team had a very positive impact on the training environment, in supporting the trainers technically and facilitating the implementation of workshops.
- The participants were comfortable dealing with gender related concepts, and are more aware of GRB concepts, purpose, tools and mechanisms.
- Participants expressed their need for more specialized technical training on Gender mainstreaming and GRB.
- The training workshop is short in time, especially that GRB implementation requires more technical and comprehensive training.

This training achieved the expected results. The participants were fully committed to the training time and related activities, and were much involved in the discussions, since the training addressed issues of interest to them and their work at the Municipality.

It is worth noting, however, that conducting the training workshops on the municipality facilities was sometimes distracting to the participants because they found it difficult to completely detach themselves from their working environment.

5. *Impact evaluation session*

***Aim:** To assess the outcomes attributable to the project on gender-responsive budget in local councils, and to determine the relevance of project activities and how efficiently and effectively they were implemented and whether the benefits generated by the project will contribute to higher level objectives.*

A two-hour impact evaluation session was held on July 30, 2009 at MIFTAH's office, attended by 13 participants representing MIFTAH, HB, GTZ and the three local councils (Birzeit, Halhoul and 'Anabta municipalities. At the beginning of the session, a presentation prepared by MIFTAH's project coordinator on the project objectives and activities was given followed by evaluation and recommendations of the municipalities.

The local councils' representatives expressed their appreciation of MIFTAH for conducting such activities, recognizing the role it played and still plays in spreading the values of gender equity and equality. They also stressed the fact that the trainings affected their way of understanding and dealing with gender-related concepts and issues. They also highlighted the importance of the trainings in identifying the needs and priorities of their local communities to be considered in their future budgets. Still, the local councils stressed the fact that they suffer from limited financial resources, causing a burden on them in reaching and responding freely and easily to the needs of their local communities.

In the 30-minute open discussion that followed, the representatives of the local councils stressed the importance of duplicating this experience in other municipalities in the Palestinian territory. They also noted that the trainings should have targeted members of the Ministry of Local Governance for the major role they play in planning, building, and adopting the municipalities' budgets.

The HB and GTZ representatives expressed their appreciation of MIFTAH for implementing these projects efficiently. They showed real interest in the recommendations presented by all partners and promised to take them into consideration.

Output: An evaluation session of the GRB project was conducted highlighting the strengths and weaknesses of the project and the lessons learnt.

C. Assessment

Progress Achieved

- The participants are more aware of their local communities' needs, and express the importance of reaching out to the public through public meetings or surveys, in order to adapt their policies and plans to at least 35% of their communities' needs.
- The participants are more comfortable dealing with gender related concepts and issues, as they are more aware that these do not contradict with their religious practices and social traditions.
- Strengthening and enhancing the cooperation between the local councils, CSOs and women activists, helps in narrowing the gap between the municipalities as service providers and the local community as beneficiaries.

- All participants believe in the importance of developing clear criteria when addressing the needs of their local communities.
- Members and department heads in the local councils are aware of the importance of involving the local community when developing their annual and strategic plans, and budgets.

Setbacks

- The many Israeli checkpoints separating the areas in the West Bank, hindered the mobility of the trainers and MIFTAH project's coordinator and supporting team.
- The lack of awareness of gender issues in 'Anabta, demonstrated especially in the first training when MIFTAH's project coordinator and the trainer were offended by some participants who dealt with gender issues as a taboo, presenting false gender definitions which contradict with religious beliefs and social traditions.
- The GRB initiative in the Palestinian territory is in itself a big challenge, especially that it is not taken as a priority.
- The limited budget and time frame of the project (six months) are not sufficient for such a comprehensive project. As such, more comprehensive and technical trainings need to be conducted targeting local council members and employees so they are more acquainted with concepts, mechanism and tools of gender responsive budgets.
- Most of the local councils suffer from limited financial resources and a lack of strategic planning.

Follow up plans

- By organizing the impact evaluation session held on the 30th of July, 2009, with the participation of stakeholders, MIFTAH has helped determine the relevance of project activities and how efficiently and effectively they were implemented and whether the benefits the project has generated are to contribute to higher level objectives.
- MIFTAH, in cooperation with the Ministry of Women Affairs, Ministry of Planning and Ministry of Finance, organized orientation workshops targeting the key technical teams in the different ministries including the Ministry of Local Governance to expose them to the gender concepts, gender mainstreaming, definition of Gender Responsive Budgeting Initiatives – good practices and lessons learnt, in addition to planning and budget analytical tools and techniques from gender perspectives, to raise their awareness towards the importance of integrating gender issues in their policies, and planned programs of their ministries. This will directly affect the local councils in Palestine when the Ministry of Local Governance receives the national budget statement, including the formal decision by the Cabinet made in June 2009 to adopt A Palestinian National Gender Responsive Budget.
- Provide the largest number of municipalities in Palestine with publications and documents produced by this project to motivate them and give them a clearer and more precise presentation of the project.

Final Remarks

- MIFTAH considers the formal decision by the Cabinet made in June 2009 to adopt A Palestinian National Gender Responsive Budget within the national budget statement a far reaching achievement that requires concerted efforts in the long process of putting this decision into practice. It entails intensive technical trainings, external visits and learning from other successful experiences of such programs, conferences, awareness sessions and workshops, more lobbying and advocacy efforts, in addition to an efficient media campaign.
- Networking and coordination among local councils in the Palestinian territory to exchange training and work experiences are necessary for the successful implementation of GRB.
- It's really important to remark, that mayors from some local councils, start contacting MIFTAH, as they are interested in the project.

Annexes (Will be provided on CD)

- Photos of some of the project's activities.
- Press articles of some activities.
- Event agenda
- Handouts
- Participants list
- A Reportage prepared by Al- Fajer TV station.
- Power Point Presentation prepared for the impact evaluation session
- Participant assessments.